

Defense Department to clean up toxic, hazardous debris at sites

A program to clean up former Department of Defense sites is shifting emphasis from simple debris removal to purging toxic and hazardous material, according to the Army Corps of Engineers.

"So far, our jobs have been without serious toxic and hazardous clean-up problems," said Col. Wilbur T. Gregory Jr., district engineer. "Now, after careful sampling and lab testing, we have a better idea of what and where the dangerous substances are, and we are ready to go out after them."

Late last month, a contract was being advertised to clean up the most toxic site tested to date. Kodiak Island cleanup on non-Coast Guard land will remove soil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls — PCBs — from abandoned Fort Tidball on Long Island.

At an isolated site near the headquarters where a vandalized transformer lies on the ground a lab report showed "very high levels of contamination," said Jack Gusmano, project officer for the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Kodiak contract will be the first project in the Corps' program to deal with PCB soil contamination in Alaska.

Until the work can be completed, the Corps will be posting signs or roping off affected areas. Though the areas are remote and abandoned, they may still be accessible to people hunting, fishing or exploring.

"We're advising people to keep away from abandoned facilities as a general rule," said Gregory.

Next year, as many as six contracts could be awarded for cleaning up suspected cancer-causing solvents such as benzene, toluene and carbon tetrachloride; insecticides, such as naphthalene; and insulation containing asbestos.

The Corps will continue to coordinate closely with the EPA and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation on the sampling program and on establishing priorities for cleanup.

Projects coming up include a package of 15 Distant Early Warning and related sites that will be issued as one or more contracts. The sites are Cape Sabine, Icy Cape, Peard Bay, Brownlow Point, Collison Point, Manning Point, Griffin Point, Nuvagapak Point, Demarcation Bay, Cape Simpson, Kogru, McIntyre (all DEW line sites), Elson Lagoon, Lake Peters and Skull Cliff.

Other projected contracts include:

- Driftwood Bay near Dutch Harbor and Unalaska.
- Cape Thompson south of Point Hope.
- Krusenstern near Kotzebue.

- Unalakleet Air Force Station and North River White Alice, two sites on the Norton Sound coast south of Nome.

- Seward Peninsula sites including Anvil Mountain radio relay, Lava Lake weather station, Davidson's Landing, Kougark Air Force Base, Moses Point, Teller, Cape Nome Air Force station, Cape Rodney, White Mountain and Cape Prince of Wales Air Force station.

- Caines Head near Seward where the Corps would transfer funds to the State Department of Natural Resources for cleanup.

- Port Heiden and Port Moller on the lower Alaska Peninsula.